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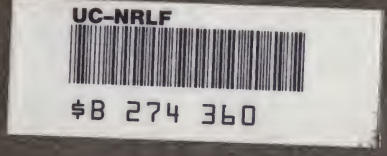

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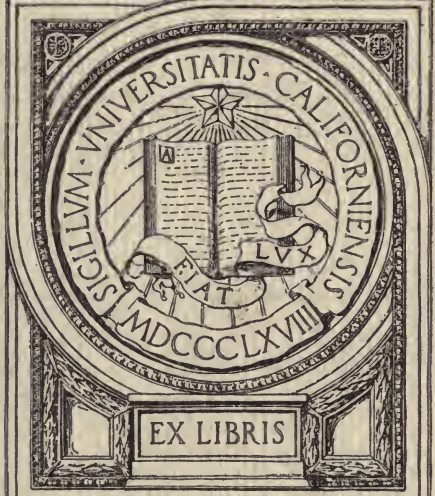

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THEOSOPHY SIMPLIFIED

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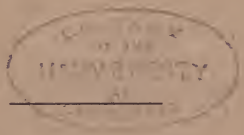
BY

IRVING S. COOPER

National Lecturer of the Theosophical Society. Author of "Ways to Perfect Health," "The Secret of Happiness," "Methods of Psychic Development"



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THEOSOPHY SIMPLIFIED

BY

IRVING S. COOPER

National Lecturer of the Theosophical Society. Author of "Ways to Perfect Health," "The Secret of Happiness," "Methods of Psychic Development"

THE THEOSOPHICAL BOOK CONCERN

"KROTONA," HOLLYWOOD, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

1915

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By Irving S. Cooper

Irving J. Cooper

June 1915

To

C. W. L.

Who first showed me the Light

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PREFACE

This simple outline of the teachings of Theosophy is intended for those who are commencing their study of the subject, and to be of service to teachers of classes in elementary Theosophy. Its only recommendation is its simplicity and directness of statement, to attain which no effort has been spared.

Chicago, March, 1915. I. S. C.

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CHAPTER I

THE SOURCES AND NATURE OF THEOSOPHY

When an unfamiliar system of thought is presented for consideration, it is always legitimate to ask: "What are the sources of your information?" Our willingness to take the time and expend the energy necessary to study that system naturally depends upon the clearness and reasonableness of the answer. So in presenting the teachings of Theosophy it is right to expect that a frank statement will be made as to the sources of theosophical knowledge.

These sources are of two kinds:

(1) Those which are accessible at once to any thoughtful man with his normal intellectual capacities, and

(2) Those which may be reached only after preliminary training and development of the character, mind and subtle senses.

An objection may be made to the second kind, by one commencing the study of Theosophy, on the ground that all information obtained in this way must be taken —at least for a time—on the statements of others. This is of course true, yet we are accustomed constantly to adopt this attitude. In fact, the greater part of current knowledge cannot be verified by the ordinary untrained man, but is accepted solely on the statements of experts.

For example, we read and believe many statements about atoms, yet none of us could duplicate the experiments by which these statements are proved without long scientific training. We accept the conclusions of

astronomers regarding the movements of the sun, moon and stars, even though these conclusions contradict the evidence of our senses, because we have faith in those who have made a specialty of astronomy. Musicians tell us of the superb technical mastery of Liszt and we believe them, though it would take us years of painstaking study and practice before we could realize this for ourselves.

It is not unreasonable, therefore, in commencing the study of Theosophy, to accept as *possible* the statements made by experts trained in theosophical investigation. Later, if it is thought worth while, an effort may be made to verify these statements and convince ourselves of the truth of the deeper teachings of Theosophy. Of course, it is unwise to accept a statement as a truth merely because it is made by another person, but it is also equally unwise to deny it until we actually know the facts. The best course is to hold the middle path and neither to deny nor affirm, but to empty the mind of prejudice and preconceived notions and to submit everything to the criterion of the reasoning consciousness and of the intuition.

The first of these sources which are accessible at once to a thoughtful man is the teaching of the *great religions* of the world. When we begin the study of comparative religion, we seem lost in a maze of contradictions and even of absurdities, but with practice we become able in thought to strip away the ceremonials, forms and customs peculiar to each religion and get at the fundamental ideas and teachings common to all.

The differences which exist between one religion and another are due to the various characteristics of the people who hold them, and to the deposit of ceremonies, speculations and fancies which, during the centuries, has gradually obscured or covered up the basic truths taught by their Founders. Fundamentally, all religions

are one, for sympathetic study clearly indicates that they teach the same doctrines and inculcate the same ideals of conduct and life.

In their externals, however, they are unlike each other, for the reason that they were planned to appeal to different races and temperaments. At our existing stage of growth, one religion cannot and does not satisfy the religious needs of the whole world, for generally when it comes to religious matters, we are more influenced by the way we are taught than by the teachings themselves. The mental and emotional characteristics of each race determine the most suitable form of instruction and, as these characteristics vary, so each religion differs in its externals in order to produce the desired result. "As fits each separate human need so seems My Image," beautifully suggests God's attitude to man.

It takes a certain bigness of mind sympathetically to study each religion for the truth it contains, since it is necessary to eliminate undue partiality for one form of worship, to learn to think in the terms and symbols of each Faith studied, to overcome prejudice, to practice tolerance and to be a lover of truth. But if this can be done by the student, *the basic teachings underlying all the great religions will be found to be perfectly in accord with the teachings of Theosophy.*

This is why Theosophy appeals to the followers of every religion and explains why Christians and Buddhists, Hindus and Parsees, Hebrews and Mohammadans, though still retaining their religion, have joined the Theosophical Society. Each finds in Theosophy that which illuminates his own religious beliefs and aids him to live the higher life inculcated by his scriptures. This is also the reason why Theosophy does not emphasize the superiority of one religion over all others, for each great Faith has its message to the world, and mankind would be poorer without it. While Theosophy is not

a religion—since its teachings are unaccompanied by ritual or ceremonial and are not in the custody of a priesthood—nevertheless it is profoundly religious, as it teaches the essential truths found in all religions.

A great many theosophical truths may be found in studying the fragments which have come down to us of the instruction given in the *ancient Mysteries*. These famous institutions, which flourished in Persia, Egypt, Greece and Rome, were founded for the purpose of giving to the advanced people of the time a philosophical and rational interpretation of the myths and legends which satisfied the common people and constituted the popular religions. Though only scattered portions of the once secret teachings now remain, still the attentive student is rewarded by finding occasionally a precious truth half-hidden in the obscure phrases of these old instructions.

Another more fruitful field of study is the teachings of several *philosophic schools* which rose to power and fell to obscurity during earlier centuries. The wonderful Pythagorean Discipline at Crotona; the brilliant Neo-Platonic Schools of Alexandria—particularly that which centered round Hypatia; the much-misunderstood alchemists, whose symbology tinged the writings of the Middle Ages; the interesting Rosicrucian Orders, the undercurrent of whose teachings permeated the whole of European thought during the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; the Masonic movement which followed, are all sources of theosophic knowledge. The statements made in the ancient books and rare manuscripts in which this information may be found are usually difficult to understand, because expressed in quaint symbols and obsolete phrases, but persistent study is richly rewarded.

Modern Theosophy is greatly indebted to *science* for its discoveries and for the exact terminology which has

resulted from the careful manner in which the statements of scientists have been formulated. Modern Theosophy is equally careful in its methods of research and its phraseology has gradually become more precise.

Theosophists of ancient and medieval times were oftentimes vague and obscure when they attempted to describe what they saw, or to formulate the laws governing human growth and existence. This was due, not to any effort on their part to describe things which did not exist, but because of the immensity of their conceptions concerning God and the universe, and because there were no words then in use which could adequately describe these things. That is why symbolism was so largely employed then, but is to a great extent unnecessary now. The richly descriptive language of science has taken the place of the symbol. How could early investigators describe electricity, an atom, a vibration, the planes of nature, when the terms themselves had not been coined, and even the most cultured people knew nothing of such things? How could they explain clearly the evolution of the human soul by means of repeated lives on earth, when even the evolution of human bodies had not yet been thought of? Thus the modern presentation of Theosophy, which is decidedly scientific in tone and treatment, was made possible only because of the development of science.

The teachings of Theosophy include those of science, and every *proved* result of scientific research finds its place in Theosophy. In certain cases theosophical investigators, using special methods of research, have anticipated science, but later, scientists have verified in their own way the results thus obtained. In still other instances Theosophy has carried the application of certain laws governing matter beyond the limits arbitrarily set by scientists, but it was justified in so doing, because it has been found by observation that a *principle*

of repetition prevails everywhere and that nature repeats in miniature in the physical world, processes which are universal in their scope.

The study of religions and ancient schools of philosophic thought combined with a knowledge of scientific discoveries is *not* sufficient, however, to explain satisfactorily all the conditions and phenomena of the world. Serious gaps still remain in our mental scheme of things, we seem unable to reconcile certain apparently conflicting viewpoints, and above all we need a guiding clew to lead us through the maze of speculations to truth itself.

As examples of conflicting viewpoints, we need only compare the statements of religion with those of science. The religionist speaks of God as the source and creator of all things, the scientist declares that the universe was formed through the agency of various forces obeying mechanical laws. The religionist tells of God's love for all His creatures, the scientist points to the undeserved misery and suffering of men and babes and the mute agony of thousands of animals and birds. The religionist turns his thought to the life beyond the grave, the scientist to a dead body and asks for proof that there is anything other than that. The religionist accepts ancient books as final authority, the scientist refuses to admit anything to be true except that which can be verified now. These antagonisms are doubtless due to *incomplete* knowledge, but how can that knowledge be gained which will show that religion, science, philosophy and art are but different aspects of the same body of truth? Is it not obvious that if this world is a unity, such a synthesis must exist?

This leads us to the consideration of those sources of theosophic knowledge which require preliminary training and development of the character, mind and subtle senses before they may be reached.

Theosophy has never agreed with the dogmatic declaration of materialists that there was nothing superphysical; or of agnostics, that superphysical things might exist but we could never know them because of the limitations of the senses, though it has always emphasized that *there is nothing supernatural,* everything taking place within the domain of natural law. Theosophy has affirmed, upon the basis of actual experience, that there are inactive senses in every human being which, when stimulated to activity, would make possible the investigation of a normally unseen realm of non-physical matter around us.

Instead of using physical instruments, however, which naturally have serious limitations even though most delicately constructed, theosophical investigators in their researches have made use of the much more difficult method of developing within themselves the power to see this realm without the mediation of any instrument. Long and arduous training is necessary before this can be done, and it is made exceptionally difficult because a character qualification is essential.

A scientist may be sensual, cruel and selfish, but his scientific work will not be impaired if his intellectual and observational powers are keen. The man, however, who wishes to take up the theosophical method of investigation, must first refine and ennoble his character, because in so doing he not only hastens the awakening of those subtle senses by means of which he comes in touch with the unseen world, but he also eliminates the possibility of misuse of those psychic faculties after he awakens them—a serious thing.

There are a few people who have had the courage to commence and the patience to persevere with this severe training and have, after years of labor, become expert in this ancient method of investigation. Modern Theosophy is heavily indebted to them for the informa-

tion they have thus obtained, for their published researches have raised Theosophy from the level of a speculative philosophy to the position of a world-power in the domain of thought, because of its richness of detail and exactitude of statement. And what they have done, others can do—provided they are willing to pay the price of constant effort, unselfish labor and the capacity to learn through failure.

The results of the investigations of these experts are priceless if we attempt to estimate their value to humanity. They have discovered many interesting and important things regarding the etheric part of the physical world and the invisible spheres—invisible, that is, to the normal human eye—which surround and envelop the earth. They have published a wealth of detail concerning the conditions which exist on the other side of death, the nature and appearance of the emotional, mental and soul bodies, the laws of human growth and of destiny, the purpose of existence and the swiftest way to reach the goal of human evolution.

Much of the exact detail which distinguishes modern Theosophy from all other schools of thinking along similar lines is due to the labors of these experts, who have spent years in obtaining the facts published and in verifying by repeated experiments and observations the conclusions to which they have come.

There is still one more source, the greatest of all, from which Theosophy has derived its most important information, and that is certain perfected men, called sometimes the Brothers and sometimes the Masters, who have completed their human evolution but remain in touch with the world to assist humanity in its growth. They are distinguished by fully awakened subtle senses, superb intellect and lofty spirituality, and have at their command a vast knowledge of nature's laws which is the fruit of an age-long experience. They place this knowl-

edge at the disposal of aspirants under certain conditions, generally that those who ask for it shall do so not by mere words, but by the noble, unselfish life they lead, dedicated to the service of humanity.

The information which the Brothers have given to those who have thus qualified themselves to receive it, has rounded out and completed the theosophical system of thought in a most wonderful way and has filled in many gaps in our knowledge. Later, as the aspirants themselves awakened and developed one subtle sense after another, they have verified the truth of this information fact by fact, and though some still remains which they are *as yet* unable to verify, still they are naturally convinced of the truth of that which they have been told, for an error has never been found in the statement of a Master.

We are now in a position to profit by a terse definition of Theosophy. The word itself is luminous and beautiful, signifying as it does from its derivation, "Wisdom concerning God." It was first used apparently by Ammonius Saccas of Alexandria in the 3rd century, to designate an eclectic system of philosophy and oriental mysticism, which later developed into Neo-Platonism. Theosophy has been variously defined but none of the definitions is ideal, though they all agree that Theosophy affirms the possibility of direct knowledge of "things divine and eternal."

Modern Theosophy may be defined as a synthesis of the essential truths of religion, science and philosophy. In presentation it blends an adequate explanation of the problems and phenomena of life and the universe with a practical system of ethics and conduct arising naturally from such an explanation. Its statements, we have seen, are based upon a critical and comparative study of earlier theosophical, philosophical and religious systems, upon the discoveries of physical science, upon data ob-

tained by trained superphysical perception, upon illumination resulting from awakened spiritual intuition, the whole of this mass of information being organized, bound together and supplemented by further information supplied by the Masters.

It is evident, therefore, from a consideration of its sources, that *modern* Theosophy is not a revelation, in the accepted meaning of that word, and that, while its fundamental truths are rock-like, because based upon reality, nevertheless the statements of its investigators as to details are not infallible. It is a growing system of thought, the result of careful study and research. Its ideal is to be a presentation of things as they are and to eliminate speculation and theory. Mistakes may be made and have been made by its investigators, but they are corrected as soon as noticed. Such mistakes, as in scientific research, are due to incomplete observation and incorrect inference from what has been seen.

It should be remembered that, because of constant practice and effort, the powers of an investigator are unfolding all the time, and that each year his capacity to observe is greater and more reliable. Naturally, therefore, the published investigations should and do show ever increasing detail and precision as the years advance, and if one wishes to gain an adequate idea of the teachings of Theosophy, the latest books should be read as well as the earlier ones. It is reassuring to note, however, that practically all the information obtained through modern theosophical investigation has stood the hard tests of time, and that nearly all the changes made have been of the nature of amplifications. This speaks well for the accuracy of those who stand at the forefront of the theosophical movement.

If Theosophy is what its friends claim it to be, then it is nothing less than the bedrock upon which all phases of the world's thought and activity are founded. Now

such a body of Knowledge is possible *theoretically,* if the universe is a unity and not a chaos, but whether modern Theosophy is an approximation to that Knowledge remains for time to prove.

CHAPTER II

THE OTHER WORLDS

Though great rivers are still being discovered in Brazil, the unexplored regions of the earth are shrinking year by year. This would be a matter only of congratulation were it not that our "natural-born travelers" will suffer the pangs of unsatisfied desire. How may that fever of discovery inherent in the race be cooled except by offering new realms for exploration? And where may those realms be found now that the visible earth has been raked, scraped, dissected, weighed and analysed? Obviously we must turn our attention towards those other worlds to which seers have pointed for so many centuries without awakening much interest, it would seem, until now.

Advanced thinkers have already come to the conclusion that we are living not only on the surface of a physical globe, but also in the midst of a normally unseen world. While many are beginning to suspect that this subtle world may be scientifically studied, a few are causing much shrugging of the shoulders by affirming that it has *already* been carefully investigated and described, its inhabitants classified and its phenomena tabulated. This statement is a strong one, we must admit, but it is made by those who have done the work and denied by those who have not even taken the trouble to read the reports of the investigations. Now these reports are exceedingly interesting and, while undoubtedly many details are lacking—for the study of a new world is a Herculean task—nevertheless what has been discovered instructs as well as fascinates.

Unfortunately our understanding of this invisible realm is oftentimes obscured because, strangely enough, we usually adopt one of two attitudes, both of which are illogical. Either we regard the whole matter as a jumble of freakish fancies and the result of unwholesome speculation, or we swing to the other extreme and veil everything related to this unseen realm in unjustified mystery and reverence, and speak of its phenomena with bated breath. Mystery is the shadow cast on nature by ignorance.

There seems to be an ingrained scepticism in most people concerning anything non-physical. It is frequently so pronounced that it distorts their opinions and prevents an unbiased judgment. This is certainly true when it comes to the consideration of the evidence for the existence of a superphysical world. Many persons dogmatically declare, without any investigation whatsoever, that such a world does not exist, not realizing that opinions based on prejudices are valueless and that, as they are unacquainted with the numerous discoveries which have been made, their statements carry no weight whatever. It is significant that all those who have studied *carefully* the available evidence affirm their conviction that a non-physical realm does exist.

Theosophical investigation of this unseen realm has shown that it is composed of several interpenetrating regions or worlds, of which only two, however, are of practical importance in this preliminary study. These two subtle worlds are contained one within the other, the solid physical earth being embedded in the very heart of the two. We may think of them as two vast spheres surrounding the earth not unlike a giant atmosphere, yet at the same time permeating everywhere the physical matter of the earth with the same ease that water vapor spreads through the air. One sphere is larger than the other and therefore extends much farther

out into space, but both of them surround us all the time, although we are normally unconscious of their existence. As the earth swings through space, following its pathway round the sun, these spheres move with it just as does the physical atmosphere.

Thus, strange as it may seem, we are living in three worlds at once and we shall find, if we continue our studies, that human evolution is intimately connected with all three. These subtle worlds are as objective and "real" to those conscious of them as the earth is "real" to us, and we should not think of them as shadowy unrealities because unknown to the physical senses. The matter of which they are formed is not physical in its characteristics and, for want of better descriptive terms, has been called emotional and mental matter; the significance of these names will be seen later.

The trend of recent scientific discoveries has been towards the infinitesimal—the dissection of the atom. Formerly it was believed that atoms were the ultimate units or bricks out of which all physical forms were built. Now it is known that the atoms themselves are complex structures, formed of differently grouped "bundles" of particles indentical in their nature. Several years ago, in a remarkable paper read before one of the English scientific societies, Sir William Crookes advanced the theory of a primitive substance underlying all the different kinds of physical matter. He called this theoretical substance "protyle" and presented some illuminative data in support of his point of view. At that time, Crookes' conclusions were not accepted, but now, through a series of brilliant investigations made possible by the refinement of electrical experimentation, the existence of electrons or ultimate particles has been generally acknowledged by scientists.

Electrons are considered by many scientists to be not "things in themselves" but merely centres of force in

the invisible ether which surrounds and penetrates all things. Theosophical investigators, through direct observation made possible by certain awakened senses, have determined that every physical object, including the human body, is bathed and duplicated in etheric matter, through which flow continually electrical, magnetic and other forces closely associated with physical life. It was noticed that there were four densities or grades of this ether, forming, with the solids, liquids and gases with which we are familiar, seven densities of physical matter; for the ether itself is physical though invisible to the normal human eye.

This brings us to the important fact that there is no gulf between the physical and the next interpenetrating world. The matter of the denser world is formed indirectly out of the matter of the subtler. During the experiments of theosophical investigators, in which they studied the structure of matter, it was found that by a strong effort of the *will*—which set certain forces in action—it was possible to break up the particles of the finest physical ether. When this was done the characteristics of the *resultant* particles entirely changed; they were no longer physical in their nature. They proved to be the molecules of the densest matter of the interpenetrating subtle world.

The molecules of this world, the *emotional* or *astral world,* obey laws different from those governing physical matter. They do not expand with heat nor contract with cold as physical molecules do. They follow a law of gravity of their own. The vibrations which move through them permit an increased power of vision out of all proportion greater than physical sight. The matter itself is extremely mobile, responding particularly in a most marvelous way to the play of emotions—hence the name, emotional matter. Its response to emotion, desire and passion is greater than that of air to sound and

ether to artificial light, for it carries the vibrations a long distance from the person generating them, and ripples into quivering masses of color varying in hue according to the type of emotion. Another striking characteristic of this matter is that it is readily moulded into various forms by emotion which, though evanescent, usually persist for several hours or days, vibrating all the time at the same rate as the original oscillation which brought them into existence.

The densest matter of the emotional world duplicates every physical object, so that it is possible while moving in its lower levels to observe what is taking place physically. Not that the physical objects themselves are visible when one is observantly active in the emotional body, but the counterparts in subtle matter of those objects are readily seen. In fact, those who are not very observant or, for one reason or another, are not aware that they are moving about in the astral world, frequently do not detect any difference between objects formed of physical matter and the subtle duplicates of those objects. Farther out in those regions of the emotional world which are some distance from the surface of the earth, varied scenes of great beauty and interest are found—the products of the creative imagination of the people living there.

The emotional world is thickly populated with all types of living things, human and non-human, not on its surface as is the case with the earth, but within it, even as fish live in the sea and birds in the air. Limbs are not necessary for walking nor wings for flying, for desire and will are the motive powers which move us from place to place in this unseen world, but nevertheless we preserve the same appearance there as here, probably from habit, but also possibly from some deeper law of form which controls all creation.

The non-human creatures follow a line of evolution

which has little to do directly with the human. They range in intelligence from the level of our lowest animals to lofty types far wiser than men—the angelic presences of religious tradition. They do not have physical bodies resembling ours, but appear in subtle bodies made of radiant emotional matter.

Animals also are there who have lost their physical bodies by death. They spend a brief though happy period in the emotional world before being born again of animals of the same species.

In this world are found millions of human beings, including not only the entire population that is living on earth at any one time—for, remember, we possess emotional bodies in addition to the physical—but also practically all those who have lost their physical bodies by death during the last thirty years. Those who have been "dead" longer than this have usually passed into the still more subtle world known as the mental or heaven world.

Lastly, there is found a very small number—contrasted with the millions of souls receiving their education on this planet—of the Masters. They are the great Teachers mentioned so frequently in theosophical literature, and it is they who have charge of human evolution.

The *mental* or *heaven world* referred to is a much larger sphere englobing the physical earth and the emotional world and yet at the same time interpenetrating the two. It may be reached therefore, not by moving in space, for it is all around us, but by learning to focus our consciousness in the mental body which is formed of its matter—a very difficult feat.

To realize again the close relationship between the different worlds, it should be noted that the exceedingly delicate matter of the mental world, which may truly be called "mind stuff," may be obtained by breaking up the finest matter of the emotional world. The mental world stands in the same relation to the emotional world as the

latter does to the physical. Mental matter displays a set of characteristics all its own. It is marked chiefly by its instant response to the force of thought, breaking into cascades of restless, changing colors with every mental impulse. The matter is most luminous and beautiful as a result of its ceaseless vibrations. To quote the words of one investigator:

> "These vibrations give rise to the most exquisite and constantly changing colors, waves of varying shades like the rainbow hues in mother-of-pearl, etherealized and brightened to an indescribable extent, sweeping over and through every form, so that each presents a harmony of rippling, living, luminous, delicate colors, including many not known to earth. Words can give no idea of the exquisite beauty and radiance shown in combinations of this subtle matter, instinct with life and motion."[1]

In accordance evidently with some process intimately connected with the structural formation of the solar system, the matter of the mental world, in common with that of the emotional and of the physical world, is distinguished by seven grades or densities. In the mental world, however, there is an important division of these different grades of matter into two groups, the four denser grades forming collectively what is called the lower mental world, the three subtler the higher mental world.

This is not an arbitrary division; it is based on certain differences in the matter itself. That of the lower mental world responds to what we call concrete thoughts and gives rise to mental images, pictures and forms; that of the higher mental world responds to our abstract thoughts by sending out waves of force in all directions.

[1] *The Ancient Wisdom,* by Annie Besant, p. 146.

There are almost countless intelligences dwelling in the heaven world. It is the realm of those lofty beings spoken of in sacred scriptures as angels or devas. It is also the true home of the Masters and their pupils, and here it is that they do most of their beneficent work of helping humanity in its age-long pilgrimage towards perfection.

The souls of all human beings are here—a vast host of egos—some of them in physical incarnation, others resting and growing spiritually between one physical incarnation and the next. Since the heaven world is all around us, a soul never leaves that realm of bliss when taking an incarnation on earth; it merely gathers round itself, to form bodies, the matter of the lower worlds with which it wishes to come into contact, and then trains these young bodies to respond to its more mature powers. As souls, we obtain only the physical body through the help of parents; the mental and emotional bodies we make for ourselves. Thus every moment of every day we, as souls, dwell in the heaven world; we are as much spirits now as we ever shall be, though it is true that much of our soul consciousness is shut away by the limitations of the brain.

CHAPTER III

THE AURA AND THE SOUL

The existence of an aura, or colored mist of rarified matter surrounding the human body, has long been known. It was frequently depicted in paintings at the time of the Renaissance, not merely as a halo around the head, but as an ovoid in the midst of which the human form is standing. We have collected personally over sixty photographs of famous paintings now in Italian art galleries, in which the aura is shown.

The aura is clearly visible to the trained investigator, and is frequently seen in part by many as a glow of light above the heads of others. All human beings, and to a certain extent animals, plants and even minerals, are surrounded and interpenetrated by a cloud of delicate matter drawn from the etheric part of the physical world and from the emotional and mental worlds. This matter is so sensitive that it responds instantly to thoughts and feelings, and as it does so its vibrations give rise to various colors.

In a developed human being this cloud of matter has been so specialized that it is to a large extent separated from the rest of the matter of the unseen worlds, in the same way that our physical bodies are distinct objects. Further, it has been so moulded and organized by the constant play of thoughts and feelings, that it has been fashioned into subtle bodies by means of which a man comes into contact and communication with the invisible worlds.

Analysis has shown that the aura is composed of four distinct layers:

(1) A striated etheric mist, bluish-grey in color, which extends outwards for several inches on all sides from the surface of the skin. This is made up largely of etheric *emanations* from the etheric double of the physical body.

(2) An oval-shaped form, which is the seat of all our emotions, passions, feelings and sensations. This is the emotional body formed of the matter of the emotional world.

(3) A similarly shaped form, in which all our concrete, every-day thoughts and mental pictures are generated. This is the mental body formed of the matter of the lower mental world.

(4) An ovoid form, which is the seat of all our abstract and philosophical thoughts and spiritual aspirations. This is the causal body or soul body, formed of the matter of the higher mental world.

It is important to remember that these various bodies, including the physical, are not separated like pearls upon a string, but that they occupy the same space, the subtler interpenetrating the denser ones, the whole forming one compact working unit we call a human being.

The *etheric double,* which should not be confused with the etheric emanations from it, is an exact counterpart of the physical body, and as it is faintly luminous and bluish-grey in color and extends out beyond the surface of the body about one fourth of an inch, it is sometimes visible to ordinary sight. It permeates the whole physical body and its function is to conduct the different currents of electricity, magnetism and vitality, which circulate everywhere throughout the tissues.

The old idea, common a generation or so ago, that there was a "vital force," was really nearer the truth than many modern theories, for when one has developed

the power to see etherically, streams of rosy-colored particles may be observed flowing down and around each nerve from the brain, until, when they reach the skin, they are forced out into the surrounding air. This outrush of vitality particles from the nerve terminals in the skin gives a striated appearance to the etheric atmosphere surrounding the body, and because the straight or drooped arrangement of the striations indicates whether a man is well or ill, it has frequently been called the "health aura."

The rosy-colored particles are charged with a force known as "vitality," which is distinct from electricity, but is derived from the sun, for on bright days the air is filled with colorless molecules charged with this force, as if with myriads of dancing sparks of light. To be of use to the physical body, however, these colorless molecules must first be drawn into the etheric double in the neighborhood of the spleen, specialized into rosy-colored particles which are then sent on their journey along the nerves and through the tissues of the body.

The *emotional body* is larger than its physical companion and on an average extends some eighteen inches out on all sides from the latter. The emotional body of a primitive man is a vaguely-outlined, indefinite cloud of matter, glowing dully with muddy colors, but that of an advanced man is a sharply defined ovoid, marked by definite color areas and bands, each one of which indicates an *habitual* trend of passion, feeling or emotion.

Despite the oval shape of the emotional body, it is interesting to know that in the emotional world we appear almost exactly as we do physically and are therefore easily recognizable. This is due to the fact that about 90% of the densest matter of the emotional body is condensed within the limits of the physical form, apparently being held there by some force of attraction, so that the oval form is only faintly indicated, the

denser counterpart of the physical body within being most prominent and clearly visible in every detail.

Whenever a strong emotion or feeling sweeps over a man, the emotional body is stirred to intense activity and from its vibrating matter there flash out those colors which are always associated with that emotion or feeling. Thus anger appears as scarlet, selfishness as a hard brown, fear as a livid grey, sympathy as a bright apple green, love as a tint of rose, devotion as blue, and so on. The study of these colors and their correspondences to the changes of consciousness is one of the most interesting of the many aspects of Theosophy.

The *mental body* is usually of the same size as the emotional, both of them growing in size as we advance along the path of evolution. With definite progress in the power to think the mental body becomes more highly organized and therefore more definite in outline. It is exceedingly luminous and radiant with clear, beautiful colors, especially in an advanced type of human being, each color area indicating an *habitual* thought attitude.

The vibrations which accompany intellectual activity emit a yellow light, which varies in hue from a strong orange yellow in a commonplace, selfish type of mind, to the beautiful primrose yellow of the philosophical mind of an advanced man. All our mental activity which can be expressed in images and pictures arises here, for the mental body is the conscious instrument used in generating concrete thoughts.

Lastly we come to the true man, the *soul,* of whom it is said in an ancient scripture:

> "He is not born nor doth he die, nor having been ceaseth he any more to be. Unborn, perpetual, eternal and ancient, he is not slain when the body is slaughtered."

This is the individuality, the soul, the ego, who sur-

vives all bodily changes, stores up all experiences and remembers all events. It is our higher Self, the source of that sense of "I" which is always in the background of all our thinking.

The form of the causal body is ovoid—in fact it is the mould upon which the mental and emotional bodies are fashioned—and while in the savage it resembles an empty bubble because undeveloped, yet in the advanced man it is marvellously beautiful, flashing with radiant colors and glowing with a living light all its own. Words are powerless to describe it; it must be seen to be known.

The growth of the soul is of almost inconceivable slowness during the early stages of human evolution, because the only experiences upon which the soul can thrive are fine emotions, inspiring thoughts and unselfish aspirations. Naturally these are almost unknown while man is still learning the crude lessons of physical existence, but they come later when he commences to turn his attention to higher things. This is the enormous advantage of living a pure and noble life, dedicated to unselfish service—it gives to the soul, the real man, that which stimulates his growth in a most wonderful manner and hastens his journey to the splendid goal of human evolution.

Whenever we think or feel, our invisible bodies vibrate strongly, and as they do so they produce two effects in the atmosphere of the subtle worlds:

(1) They set up waves which radiate out from us in all directions, not unlike circular water waves on the surface of a pond after the fall of a pebble, but it should be remembered that thought waves move out as rapidly expanding spheres of which we form the centre, not merely as increasing circles. The distance to which these waves penetrate is proportionate to the intensity of the thought or emotion which created them; a strong thought

sends out a powerful wave, a weak thought a feeble wave which soon flickers out.

These thought and emotion waves affect more or less the thoughts and feelings of everyone they touch, and tend to stir up similar but not exact reproductions of the impulse which started them on their journey. Thus a feeling of depression over some personal failure will tend to reproduce similar feelings of depression in the emotional bodies of many people within a certain radius, but each person so affected will associate the depression with some trouble which he has experienced, and not with the trouble of the sender. In the same way a strong thought of joy will cause many in the immediate neighborhood to feel joyous, though they know not why, usually connecting the emotion which surges into their thoughts with some happy event which perhaps has happened not long before.

(2) A strong emotion or thought actually builds a little form in the subtle matter of the unseen worlds, and projects it with the rapidity of a rifle bullet to the object or person with whom the thought was connected. This thought-form may persist for many hours or even days, depending upon the intensity of the original impulse, and its one function in life is to impress upon the subtle bodies of the distant person the *exact* thought or emotion which brought it into existence. This once accomplished and its force discharged, it melts away again into the sea of surrounding matter as a cloud melts into the blue sky, but for the time being it was almost a living thing, charged with thought energy.

If the thought or emotion is personal and not connected with another, the thought-form generated lingers around its creator, and during some moment when the consciousness of the latter is passive, discharges its energy upon him. Thus many of the thoughts which

tempt us are those which we ourselves generated a few hours or days before.

These facts indicate how we may be of much service to others by the assistance and encouragement we can give them with our thoughts. Furthermore it warns us to be on our guard as to the kind of thoughts we permit our minds to think and to the quality of emotions we allow ourselves to feel. For our thoughts and feelings create a very real personal atmosphere through the influence of which we help or hinder those with whom we come in contact.

Whenever we go to sleep, we withdraw from our physical bodies and move about in the unseen world using our emotional bodies. All people are not equally conscious, however, while their physical bodies are asleep, and the extent to which we are aware of the fact that we are in an unseen world depends primarily upon the stage of growth we have reached as souls and secondarily upon our physical knowledge of the existence of that world.

The consciousness of the densely ignorant, primitive man is so undeveloped, that, during the hours of sleep when he is no longer experiencing the stir and rush of physical life, he is practically unconscious as he floats in his cloudy emotional body just above his slumbering physical body. In a little more developed type, the man is actively conscious in his emotional body while his physical body sleeps, but he knows nothing of the unseen world, as he is completely absorbed in thinking over his own petty plans and dreaming about the objects of his desires. At a still further stage of development, glimpses of the outside emotional world are caught now and then, and such a man may move some distance away from his slumbering body in search of these half-glimpsed adventures and scenes.

A thoughtful, cultured man, however, especially one

who has had some training as an occultist, is very active in the emotional world, meeting many people, visiting distant places and going through interesting experiences. If willing, he may be a power there for good, teaching, helping and protecting those who know much less than he. This is the beneficent work of those known as the "Invisible Helpers."

Those whom we mistakenly call "dead" are quite active in the emotional world for several years after the death of their physical bodies, and it is possible for us at night to meet and talk with them. Death is a separation only in our imagination, for we are with those who have passed on and whom we love, every night of our lives.

Sometimes when we awake in the morning we remember with singular vividness some scene, experience or conversation. Such a dream is usually a memory of something which has actually happened to us while out of our physical bodies. We should remember, however, that we may be very active in the emotional world at night and yet retain not a single memory of what we have done when we awake in the morning. This is entirely due to the insensitiveness of the brain.

The usual dreams, which are grotesque, fantastic and illogical, arise spontaneously in the brain itself while we are away from it. They are usually fragments of pictures or experiences automatically reproduced by the brain cells during the absence of any guiding intelligence, and their very absurdity shows that the brain is merely an instrument of consciousness, not an originator of thought.

It is helpful if we clearly understand that our waking consciousness—that is, the totality of the thoughts and feelings of which we are aware while awake—is only a small portion of our whole consciousness. In fact, our waking consciousness is made up of only those *overtones*

arising in the grey matter of the brain by sympathetic response to the more powerful vibrations of the emotional and mental bodies, the seats respectively of our emotional nature and mind. In the great majority of cases, because of general undevelopment, lack of training and care in diet, the nervous tissue is not very responsive, and as a result of the very limitations of the brain as a transmitting instrument, we are aware in our waking consciousness of only a small portion of all our emotions and thoughts.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DEATH

Death is an episode not a tragedy; it is liberation from the physical body and not the annihilation of the consciousness. Though death may take from us our outworn or outgrown bodies, it grants us the wider freedom of the unseen worlds, and to those who know, death has no terrors—not one. Instead of being a dark-robed King of Terrors, death is a bright Presence bearing the blessed key which unlocks the prison house of the flesh; and it would be well for us to learn the truth about what happens after death; and then to cast aside for ever all grief and mourning—twin offspring of ignorance.

There is a foolish aphorism current among us that all men are equal in the grave—king and beggar, sage and fool. This is perhaps true of their physical bodies, but it is a mistake so far as the men themselves are concerned. We are unchanged by death; our powers of consciousness may indeed become somewhat greater and the extent of our vision and perception larger, but we are the same people after death as before—mentally, morally and spiritually. Death cannot transform us into something different just because it strikes away the physical instrument, the body, we have used on earth. It cannot suddenly convert us into prayerful saints or all-wise spirits; such changes can only come about during the long course of evolution. After death we cling to the same follies, believe the same half-truths, display the same prejudices and associate with the same sort of people as we did while in physical incarnation.

True, we know a little more, because we are surrounded by the phenomena of a larger world, and we are at least convinced that death does not end all, because we ourselves have survived it, but on the other hand few people are careful observers, and so the knowledge we obtain after death is usually general and not detailed, and further, it is often distorted by our beliefs and prejudices.

The act of dying and of going to sleep are similar except in a few particulars. In both cases we withdraw from the physical body, but when we go to sleep the etheric matter in the physical body remains unchanged, and therefore while we are absent, the currents of vitality play through the body and keep it alive. But when we die, the etheric double goes out with us, the currents of vitality, which flow in ether, cease, and the physical body becomes cold and motionless, even though all its organs may be unimpaired. As soon as the etheric matter withdraws, the slow disintegration of the cells commences and decay sets in.

As we withdraw from the physical body at the time of death we are surrounded by the etheric matter which came out with us. This envelops us like a fog and prevents us from obtaining even a glimpse of the astral world which surrounds us with its multifarious activities and interests. As a result, most of us during this period, which lasts several hours, are entirely unconscious of our condition and environment.

After a time this etheric matter slowly slips away and we become more and more aware of the emotional world of which we are now a conscious inhabitant. Since every physical object is duplicated in emotional matter, we are apt at first, particularly if we are not very observant, to notice very little difference between this new world and the physical earth. Indeed, it is difficult at times to convince some people that they are really

"dead," for they are frequently possessed of such fantastic ideas as to what *ought* to happen but which does not happen after death, that it takes several days to persuade them that they have really lost their physical bodies.

After a few attempts, however, to eat and walk and talk as they were accustomed to do on earth, these obstinate people begin to realize that something is wrong. They eat the food of which they think and therefore immediately see before them, but for some reason it has no taste and does not give them any satisfaction. They have still to learn that the astral body does not require food. They walk about among their old haunts and homes but find themselves unable to move certain objects as before. They have still to find out that a person living in the unseen world cannot move *physical* objects merely by trying to lift their astral counterparts.

They talk to others they meet and are very much puzzled at first to notice that while they can converse with some people at any hour, other persons will only pay attention to them about eight hours out of twenty-four. During the rest of the time these peculiar men and women—for as such they are considered by the obstinate "dead" people whose experiences we are studying—do not respond to anything which is said. Our friends in the emotional world have still to discover that while they can mingle and speak at any time with other people who are also "dead," they cannot gain the attention of those in physical incarnation during the hours when the latter are awake, that is, when the consciousness is focussed in the physical brain. Only when the physical bodies of people in incarnation go to sleep, are they released from the limitations of the brain and therefore responsive to astral surroundings.

As we gain more experience in this life we are leading after death, we learn many other important lessons and

facts. For some time we are apt to believe it necessary to walk about as we did on earth, to regard a door as something to be opened before we can pass through, and to think of walls as being impassable barriers. After a time we find that we can pass through any of these seemingly solid things without the slightest difficulty, and that, when we desire to go to a distant place, there is not the slightest necessity for *walking* there. All we need do is to will strongly to go to that place, there is a sense of motion, and we find ourselves there.

One of the most common dreams is that of flying—either of moving through the air or skimming along the ground, taking only a running step now and then. By questioning audiences in many cities, it has been found that about 25 to 40 per cent of intelligent people have dreams of this description. Such dreams of flying are merely indications that we are learning how to move about in the way which is normal in the emotional world.

We also realize after death that every uncontrolled passion and appetite of the ignoble sort, which we allowed to fasten upon us during our life on earth, is something for which we must *now* pay the price. The cravings, which we were accustomed to gratify without question, can no longer be satisfied because our physical bodies are gone. All the passions and desires are still as strong as before, and there is nothing to do now but to live them down and let them die out for want of gratification. We bitterly regret that we did not know this before death, because the bite of an unsatisfied desire is now far stronger than it was when we were living in a physical body, for this is the world of feeling. Any hell that is to be found after death is one which we make for ourselves by what we do and feel and think while on earth—we are not punished by any external power, we punish ourselves.

We also see how utterly wrong it is to give way to

uncontrolled grief for those who are "dead," for now we, who have lost our physical bodies by death, are continually surrounded by the almost unbearable thoughts of grief and passionate longing created by our loving but misguided friends who are mourning our death. Strangely enough, though these same friends are with us and talk with us while their physical bodies are asleep, just as soon as they awake in the morning, they revert to the old delusion that they have lost us, and think thoughts of bitter sorrow all day long. We stand beside them and cry out that we are there, but they do not hear us or even feel our presence, because their nervous systems are so insensitive and their attention is so fully directed to worldly affairs. They make us, the dead, very unhappy and miserable by their illogical and foolish attitude, and we can really only gain relief from this intolerable condition when they begin to *forget* us and think of other things. Be under no delusion that grief or mourning gratify the "dead;" it only makes them miserable. Why cannot people realize that all such sorrowing is *wrong,* that uncontrolled grief makes life a hell for us who are living in the emotional world, and that there is really no separation since those who love us are with us every night while their physical bodies are asleep and resting. God did not design this world to be a torture chamber—the source of all sorrow is ignorance, if we only knew it.

As the years roll on—counting time as is done on earth—we find that more radiant and beautiful regions of this emotional world unfold before our gaze, and we are startled to discover that we have been surrounded by these glorious regions all the time but did not know it, because of a peculiarity of the emotional body. It seems that it can only respond to the vibrations of the emotional world outside it, according to the degree of sensitiveness of the matter on its *surface.* If this surface

layer is coarse, we sense only slow vibrations such as are characteristic of the lower levels of the emotional world; if fine, then the swifter vibrations of the higher levels will bring their messages to our consciousness.

We are told that a curious rearrangement of the matter of the emotional body took place immediately after our death. By an instinctive effort of the emotional body, the matter composing it was thrown into concentric layers, the coarsest on the outside, the finest of all within, the various other grades lying between the two. This arrangement was unnecessary and we could have stopped it had we known that it was taking place, but we did not know, and so the emotional body instinctively sorted out the matter in this way, thereby prolonging its existence.

This rearrangement caused us to be conscious only on that level of the emotional world corresponding in density to the matter on the surface of the emotional body. Hence, because our life on earth was not all that it might have been, we did not have a very high opinion at first of this emotional world, because we were limited to a rather low level for a while. In fact, some of us had rather an uncomfortable time of it during the first few months, because we had built a considerable amount of coarse matter into our emotional bodies by unwholesome habits and impure diet. Finally this wore away and we became conscious of very much more pleasant regions.

This opening up of new vistas of beauty and enjoyment is continually taking place with every person as the coarser particles are gradually eliminated from the emotional body. And after we have lived in this world several years, our interest in worldly affairs wanes, because there are so many more interesting things to attend to here. While we still love the people who are yet in physical incarnation, nevertheless we realize sensibly

that they must live their lives as we lived ours, and that we really only hinder them by trying to interfere. Further, as we become conscious of the more beautiful levels of the emotional world, the duplicates of physical objects gradually become less prominent, and so little by little we lose touch with earth life and turn our thoughts to higher and more important things. We become more introspective and begin to learn the value of our own thoughts.

Eventually there comes a time when we slowly awaken to a new glory of life and color which is beyond all words to describe, and so intense is our bliss that it does not even interest us to know that we have now cast off the useless emotional body—which speedily disintegrates—and are living in our radiant mental body in the heaven world. In the words of one who has learned to lift the consciousness, even while functioning in the brain, to this supernal world, a man who withdraws into the heaven world "awakens to a sense of joy unspeakable, of bliss immeasurable, of peace that passeth understanding. Softest melodies are breathing around him, tenderest hues greet his opening eyes, the very air seems music and color, his whole being is suffused with light and harmony. Then through the golden haze dawn sweetly the faces loved on earth, etherealized into beauty which expresses their noblest, loveliest emotions, unmarred by the troubles and passions of the lower worlds. Who may tell the bliss of that awakening, the glory of that first dawning of the heaven world?"

Many centuries may be spent in this world of happiness engaged in assimilating the experiences gained on earth and transmuting their essence into wisdom and faculty. This world is our true home and here we enjoy the fruits gathered during our visit to earth. The time spent here is a period of inner growth, and the food we consume is the harvest of good thoughts, emotions and

aspirations, which we sowed during the earth life. The heaven life is one of intense, unalloyed happiness, without even the shadow of a sorrow.

After a period in the lower heaven world, the length of which is determined by the stage of evolution we have reached as souls, and the amount of experience we gained during our life on earth, the time comes when we have thought over every fragment of experience, carried out every spiritual aspiration, lived through every joy, accomplished everything possible in this world, of which we can conceive. At that moment the now useless mental body drops away and our consciousness suddenly expands to that of the mature soul, our true inner Self. Then we realize our divine nature, then we remember the long path we have trodden to gain our present stage of evolution, then we recall the past lives we have lived on earth, for the causal body is the storehouse of all memories and it never forgets though the brain and lower mind may be ignorant of the past.

For a varying length of time we live in this condition of pure soul consciousness. The savage has but a flash of this lofty condition; an advanced philosopher may enjoy this state for years or even centuries. But with all, the time inevitably comes when there is awakened a thirst for more experience, for activity, for increased knowledge of details *such as may only be gained on earth,* and with that dawning desire, the soul turns its consciousness once more towards the lower worlds. First it draws round itself a cloud of matter of the lower mental world out of which, during the childhood of its future physical body, it fashions a mind body; then it gathers to itself a cloud of matter of the emotional world which later is moulded into an emotional body; lastly it becomes linked to an infant body provided by parents with whom the soul has formed ties in previous lives on earth. And thus it is that a new incarnation commences

as the child is born, a child with its as yet unorganized emotional and mental bodies, through which, as the years advance, the mature soul behind is able ever more and more to manifest its powers.

CHAPTER V

GROWTH THROUGH REINCARNATION

One of the most illuminative and helpful of the teachings of Theosophy is that this world, with all its activities and interests, is in reality a great educational institution in which millions of souls and countless other creatures are receiving the instruction which they need for their growth. We learn that there are many more human beings connected with the earth than ever appear in incarnation at any one time, but that all are enabled to gain the experiences they need by making a short visit periodically to this world, thereby coming in contact with the lessons taught by civilization.

Thus each life spent here is merely a day in the greater soul life, and each time we return we resume our lessons about where we left off before, aided, of course, by what we have gained by home study—for heaven is the home of the soul. The savage is commencing his education in the kindergarten of life; the spiritually developed man is nearing the time of graduation from this world school; the rest of us are standing on some step between these two extremes. We have gleaned much experience from hundreds of lives in the past—that is why we are far more advanced than the savage; and in the future, new lives will help us complete and round out our education.

This view of human life and of the growth of the soul is called reincarnation or rebirth, and in a more or less pure form is the working philosophy of some 650 millions of human beings today. As a philosophical conception it is hoary with age, and has apparently held

the attention by its logic and inherent reasonableness, of many of the great leaders of thought during all periods of history.

Yet many persons when they first hear of reincarnation, reject the idea without any consideration and exclaim: "What a horrible belief! I am sure I don't want to come back again!" And for some reason such people, who are otherwise sensible enough, seem to think that their dislike of reincarnation proves it untrue and unnecessary.

But does dislike of teaching make it unnecessary? Does the rebellion of the small boy who is kept by his parents at school make his education any less essential? In later years does not this same small boy look back upon his rebellious feelings with a smile of amusement at his shortsightedness? And may we not as souls, look back upon this time when we are seeking to avoid the priceless lessons of life, and smile at our own ignorance and lack of understanding of the purpose of existence?

Are we actually opposed to reincarnation *as such?* Let us suppose that this earth were a glorious paradise in which sorrow, suffering and trouble were unknown. When death claimed us, would we not be overcome with despair at leaving this land of bliss? If someone said that rebirth was a possibility, we would leap at the chance and offer premiums to get back to earth! If we are perfectly frank with ourselves, we must admit that we are not objecting to reincarnation merely as a process of being born again, but that what we wish to avoid are the many trials, difficulties and sorrows of physical existence. We want to escape experience, not rebirth!

Yet those very experiences which we seek to escape, those very sorrows and difficulties and trials, have taught us some of the grandest and deepest lessons of life, and have forced us to awaken many a power of consciousness and will, that otherwise would never have been stim-

ulated to activity. The hardships of civilization have made us what we are, while ease and luxury only sap our courage and deaden our initiative. A person who has never suffered or failed or felt sorrow, is a person without much sympathy, compassion, or real understanding of life.

Obviously, then, our emotional objections to reincarnation are hopelessly illogical and childish, and as thoughtful people we should not permit our dislike of the teaching process to carry away our reason and good sense.

The idea of reincarnation is exceedingly logical, whether we admit it to be a fact in nature or not. It offers to the growing soul, not the paltry gains of a single life on earth, but unlimited experience in many stations of life and under all possible circumstances. Not a single event can happen to us which does not offer something of value for growth, even though the drop of wisdom which may be distilled from it is small.

By varying the conditions of birth and the occupation from life to life, lopsided development can be prevented and an all-round knowledge of the world obtained. Thus if this life, which we are now leading, is but one of a series, each experience, no matter how trivial, is valuable; but if this is the only life we live on earth, then we must frankly admit, that much of that which we experience and learn here is practically useless in the future, for the knowledge gained would be of value only on earth and not in any heaven world. If we return we can make good use of that knowledge, but if we do not, then many of our efforts and lessons gained at great cost are just so much wasted time.

Furthermore, what is the value of physical existence to a soul who inhabits the body of an infant that lives but a few hours, or the body of a child criminal born and reared in the slums? If we live but one life, there is no

satisfactory explanation; but if this life is one of many arranged in an ascending series, then we see in the two conditions just mentioned, the payment of a debt in one case, and the first efforts of an ignorant untaught soul in the other.

One of the current misconceptions about reincarnation, which prevents a consideration of the idea by thoughtful people, is that it teaches the return of a human being to the body of an animal—that next life we may be born as a dog or a horse! This point of view is obviously so absurd that it seems foolish to mention it, yet people who ought to know better seriously advance it as an argument against reincarnation.

This curiously distorted misconception is only believed by the ignorant peasants in those religions which teach reincarnation, but does not represent at all the belief of their more advanced adherents. It is as sensible to speak of transferring a college student to a kindergarten class in order to recommence his education, as it is to think of a human soul being born again in the body of an animal. Nature is never so unreasonable as this!

Progress is forwards, not backwards, so as we advance we always come back in human bodies, each one a little better than the previous one. Sometimes, it is true, for some grievous fault, we may during one incarnation retrace our steps to a slight extent and take birth in a less advanced type of body and under less favorable conditions, but this retrograde movement is only apparent and not real, even as the backward movement of an eddy in the flowing water of a river does not change the forward course of the stream.

Another misconception is that we are reborn immediately. Careful investigation has shown, however, that this rarely happens, and that the normal interval between one life and another varies from a few score years in the

case of an undeveloped soul to twenty centuries or even more in the case of a far advanced type. The length of this interval depends primarily upon the amount of experience gained during the earth life, and this in turn depends upon three factors:

(1) The length of the physical life—the longer the life, the more experience.

(2) The quality of the life. Some lives are tranquil and placid while others are adventurous and crowded with events—naturally the latter supply more experience.

(3) The age of the soul. We did not commence our evolution at the same time, and may therefore be sorted out theoretically into classes such as is done actually with children in a school, hence we are not of the same educational age. The older the soul, the less it engages in purely physical pursuits and the more it is interested in mental, moral and spiritual things. Naturally, activities of the latter type, inasmuch as they are expressions of our larger life in the subtler worlds, give us more to think over and assimilate during the interval between one life and the next.

There are three possible theories to account for the soul before it commenced its life here at birth:

(1) It was newly created at birth by God—a point of view commonly held in Christian countries. This is the theory of special creation.

(2) It existed before birth in some spiritual state, but has never lived before on earth. This is the theory of pre-existence.

(3) It has lived many times before on earth, and its existing capacities and abilities are the results of that past experience. This is the theory of reincarnation.

One of these three theories must be right, and it is our duty carefully to study the facts of life until we can determine which one is true. If we love truth, prejudice should not blind us nor should the traditional beliefs, held without question by those around, deter us from forming our own independent opinion.

One of the hardest problems for a humane person to solve is the reconciliation of the heart-breaking injustice of many of the conditions of this world with a belief in the perfect Justice and Love of God. Some souls are born in slums and taught nothing but crime; others are reared in refined families and tenderly guarded by loving fathers and mothers. Why, if either of the first two theories are true? Some are born into crippled and diseased bodies; others into bodies that are perfect. Why? Some are born as idiots while others are gifted with brilliant intellectual powers. Again, why?

We may, of course, explain all of these conditions to our own satisfaction on the basis of physical heredity and the responsibility of parents, but does this make the situation any more just so far as the *souls* themselves are concerned? They are the ones who suffer, not the parents, and if we are to see God's Justice in the world, we must understand why they suffer as they do.

Many people are unwilling to admit that God is unjust, and so, because they are unable to justify the actual facts spread out before their eyes, fall back on the statement that all these conditions are the workings of an *inscrutable* Providence, whose ways we may not question. This is, of course, not an explanation of the conditions; it is an admission of ignorance. Nor is there any ground for the hope—in the light of the first two theories—which is expressed by many persons, that although there is undoubtedly much injustice and undeserved suffering in the world, death will surely square all and we shall receive our due recompense on the other

side of the grave. Have we any justification for this hope? If God created a world so imperfectly conceived that rampant injustice is found everywhere, how do we know that the same state of affairs does not prevail after death?

But there is a line of reasoning which carries us out of this intolerable situation and illuminates all our human problems. We may reduce this reasoning to a very simple statement:

Life is unjust if we experience any undeserved suffering or unearned happiness.

Much comes to us which we have neither earned nor deserved in this life.

Therefore, if a just God exists, we must have lived on earth before and during that time started the causes which now are controlling circumstances.

We may expand this line of reasoning and approach the problem from a slightly different angle:

This life is a living hell if we are the innocent victims of a Power which is either so merciless, unjust or weak, that it is unable to control the world it has created.

Unless the conditions of birth, the extent of our capacities and abilities and of the opportunities which come to us, are the direct results of our own efforts and therefore deserved, we are such victims.

But if we are not victims and these conditions were caused by ourselves, then we must have lived on earth before, or in some condition exactly resembling physical existence, in order to have sown the seed we are now reaping as harvests.

If we refuse to be false to our intuition that God is absolutely just, the conclusion is inevitable that reincarnation is the true theory regarding the soul. Theosophy is unassailable when it affirms that there is no injustice anywhere in the universe, and that every event of life—when we can see the whole of it—is in reality

part of the working of a perfect law of cause and effect which is flawless in its justice. We call an event unjust because we are looking only at the result and have not the power to turn back the pages of history and see the cause.

But there are also other facts which indicate that reincarnation is a law of nature. Notice the enormous difference in mental and moral faculties between one man and another—between a Hottentot and a Huxley. Education and environment cannot make all the difference. A Hottentot may be taught in our most approved way and amid advantageous surroundings, but while there would be a certain amount of progress, his advancement would not be great.

It is not a question alone of physical heredity. In the case of twins, born under exactly the same pre-natal influences, the most striking differences in ability and character are frequently noticed after a few years. This would not be the case of physical heredity were the only factor at work.

But if we understand that the souls themselves differ in experience, that some are just commencing their schooling while others are near to graduation, then these differences are easily and logically explained. Physical heredity no doubt plays an important part so far as the quality and appearance of our physical bodies are concerned, but we bring with us our emotional and mental powers when we come, in the form of innate faculties. Whence come the faculties of the "born" teacher, speaker and leader? Oftentimes the parents and even the ancestors do not display them. How explain the appearance of a Napoleon, a Shakespeare, a Wagner? The most careful tracing of their ancestry leaves us more puzzled than before, if physical heredity is the sole factor.

What is the source of genius? Can water rise higher

than its source; if not, why should offspring be greater than their parents and ancestors? But if a genius is an old soul who has developed enormous capacity along a certain line—music, drama, painting, mathematics—then we need not strain to breaking, the theory of physical heredity in order to explain his appearance in the world. Reincarnation also shows why the sons and daughters of a genius are never equal to the parent—a genius can only transmit his physical peculiarities to his offspring, never his inspiring talents, which are the powers of the soul.

An objection is frequently made to the idea of reincarnation on the ground that if we have lived before we would have memories of the past. The argument which the objector has in mind runs something like this:

We remember whatever we have experienced; we have no memories of past lives; therefore we have not lived before.

This reasoning is exceedingly faulty because it leaves out of account that physically we forget experience more than we remember it. How many of us can remember exactly what we did and said twelve years ago this day? Not one. How many of us can remember everything we did last week, or even yesterday? Major events, yes, but not details. Why? Because the memories have been lost forever? No, only because the physical brain cannot recall them. If we are thrown into a hypnotic trance state by a psychologist, we can easily be helped to recall everything we have done in the past, the extent to which we are able to recover these old memories depending upon the depth of the trance. *This is absolute proof that every one of us possesses millions of memories of which the physical brain has no recollection whatsoever.* Obviously the argument advanced against reincarnation is not sound, for there may exist a deep layer of our consciousness in which adhere the memories of other

lives on earth—memories entirely unknown to the waking consciousness.

This at least is the statement of theosophical investigators, and their conclusions are borne out by the experiments of de Rochas, who forced the consciousness of a hypnotized woman back step by step into what were apparently the memories, not of one past life only, but of four. Further, it should not be forgotten that some people do remember their past lives, at least in part, and in making this statement we do not have in mind those persons who imagine themselves to have been in the past Anthony or Cleopatra or some other romantic character! Children frequently have glimpses of other lives, and strive to tell us of them, but we laugh and call them fancies, and the child soon forgets, especially as it grows older and the brain tissue becomes less plastic to the influence of the mind.

Reincarnation is not an endless process, any more than we go to school all our life. It ceases when we have learned all the major lessons this world can teach and we have reached the stage of the perfect man. Then we are ready to assume the greater duties and commence the wider work for which our education in the world-school has fitted us. For just as we go forth into the world after our school days are over, so do we venture into a larger field after our many lives on earth are ended—the analogy is exact.

CHAPTER VI

THE PROBLEM OF DESTINY

We measure life by false standards, by pleasure and pain and not by growth. If life is pleasant we bless destiny, if unpleasant, we curse it, never considering in either case whether we grow through the experiences which come. Destiny is Nature's plan of education; she is not trying to please us, to kill time, to furnish a continual round of pleasure; she is endeavoring to teach us. That is why we must work, endure hardships, struggle for what we get. Rugged lessons truly, but wonderfully effective in their results, for such teaching as we receive on earth produces strong men and brave women, not weaklings. Even though lives are spent in learning the lessons, they are eventually mastered, for in this world-school there are no failures.

Destiny, however, offers many problems, and the greatest of them all is to find the cause of the fate which brings us to our parents, determines our opportunities, gauges our faculties and moulds our lives. To a certain extent this problem was considered in the last chapter, but we must go further, for during the centuries three answers have been proposed to explain human destiny. Let us consider these answers in turn.

The first answer is that our lives are moulded at the dictates of some Being who is the Ruler of the universe. At His command all things come or are withheld. We are like puppets moved by an unseen hand across a stage; we act, but the scenes, the actors, our very characters and the events which happen, are all prescribed by Him. If He wills it, we may be exalted in the eyes

of men; if it is His wish, we may be disgraced and shamed. No exertion can change our destiny; that rests with Him. We have neither earned the happiness nor deserved the suffering which is our portion, for our destinies are decided on high.

This may be considered to be an exaggerated statement of a particular viewpoint, yet this is exactly what is *implied* in the resigned acceptance of one who murmurs—as many of us have done after a blow has fallen: "Thy Will be done." Yet how hard it is to think that all we see happening around us is due to God's Will. We ask ourselves if it be true that he blinds children, breaks the hearts of strong men, permits people to be sent to prison though innocent of crime, creates a world in which souls fresh from His hands may be born in crippled or idiotic bodies and babes may become diseased for the sins of their *parents.* If we dare not go to the extreme of saying that He does all this, then we are merely avoiding the inevitable outcome of a consistent application of this answer to destiny.

But if God deliberately causes such suffering or *even permits it to happen,* without justification, to the souls concerned, how can we reverence Him? What purpose is there in it all? We do not know why we came here, we do not know whither we are to go, and during our stay on earth we are unjustly treated. The future is uncertain, without promise, for if He allow destiny to crush our neighbor, may He not permit the same awful fate to visit us? We must submit to every caprice, for destiny cannot be controlled by us but only by Him.

Is this a satisfactory answer to the problem? Emphatically it is not, and surely it is only accepted blindly by so many, because they refuse even to think about its unreasonableness, believing that no other solution exists, and fearing that if they trust themselves to the stormy sea of doubt, they may be lost.

According to the second answer to the problem of destiny, life is merely the product of circumstances, the result of chance. There may or may not be a God, but if He does exist, He does not concern Himself very closely with the world He has created, and may therefore be left out of account so far as destiny is concerned. We may be born in the hovel of a savage, or in the home of refined parents, for there is no choice or law governing birth, and the soul must accept what it receives. Human bodies are born because their parents are swayed by passion. We have done nothing to deserve our birth conditions or environment; in fact, from the viewpoint of this answer to destiny, it is absurd to speak of the events of life which happen to us as expressing any purpose; they merely happen. Luck rules, chance is king.

Assuredly, we can never be certain of results. We may toil for years only to fail in the end, or we may win by a lucky move. All talk of rewards and punishments is idle. We are but gamblers spinning the wheel of fortune; if we pick the right color we succeed, if we make a mistake, we lose. All we can do is to strive to win and then anxiously await the next turn of the wheel, for there is no law, no certainty.

This is surely a tottering foundation upon which to build the structure of a life, and yet it is the unreasoned philosophy of many. Strange how illogical we are sometimes, for all the facts which we have gleaned from nature show us that changeless law rules everything in the realm of science, and that nature utterly repudiates chance. Science is only possible because nature is organized law and chance a figment of the human imagination. Why, then, when it comes to human events and human existence, should we put everything in a compartment and label it "Chance and Disorder," while we are obliged to put all other things in the universe in another

compartment and label it "Law and Order"? It is illogical and absurd to do so, for surely law must govern all things, human and non-human, great and small.

The third answer to the problem of destiny is that man, an immortal soul, is the moulder and master of his own destiny, because he has started and will start all the forces which mould the circumstances in which he lives. This is the point of view accepted and taught by Theosophy.

It tells us that no one is to blame except ourselves for our birth conditions, our character, our opportunities, our abilities, for all these things are due to the working out of forces we have set going either in this life or in former lives. Thus all existing conditions are due either to the immediate or remote past, because, to use a luminous simile of St. Paul, we are reaping the harvests which have grown from seed we have sown before—"whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

From the seeds of good and bad actions spring the harvests of pleasant and unpleasant physical circumstances; from the seeds of attentiveness to small opportunities spring the harvests of greater opportunities; from the seeds of good and evil thoughts and desires spring the harvests of good and bad character.

These results are as inevitable as the fall of a stone to earth after it has been thrown into the air. We are what we are because of our past actions, desires and thoughts. There is no favoritism in nature; we must earn what we receive. If this idea is once grasped, then envy and resentment become impossible and we cease useless cursing at fate.

This conception of destiny does not eliminate God from the world; our idea of Him becomes far grander than before. Instead, however, of a world so imperfectly conceived that He must constantly interfere to set things straight, we realize that the universe, even

to the slightest detail, is perfect in its working, because guided by exquisitely balanced natural and moral laws. When these laws are transgressed, suffering comes; when they are obeyed, happiness is ours; because of this it is possible for us to learn right from wrong.

Sometimes people exclaim, when they have only partially grasped this conception of destiny: "But why should these merciless laws of destiny make us suffer for things we have forgotten?" As this natural question contains several misconceptions, it will be necessary to analyze it carefully, in order to gain a clear understanding of what is implied therein.

In the first place, what do we mean by a "law of nature"? Certainly not laws *in any sense* resembling those turned out each year by hundreds from our legislative bodies. A law of nature is merely a condition, an inevitable sequence. If a certain thing is done, such will be the result, and the result never changes. Inevitableness is the chief characteristic of natural law. Under the same conditions of atmospheric pressure, heat *always* causes water to boil at a certain temperature. If it were not for the inevitable character of natural law, science would be impossible, and, because we could never know what to expect, the wheels of industry would cease to move. May not this same inevitableness apply likewise to moral laws? If so, it is obvious, that if in a past life or lives certain causes are started, they must produce their inevitable effects, whether our *physical* consciousness remembers the causes or not.

We should not forget that the soul always remembers, and when in our brain consciousness we are writhing under a sense of injustice, because of some event which has happened, the soul itself is comparing the present result with its past cause, and is learning a lesson thereby. Physical forgetfulness of the past, therefore, should not logically be able to affect the working of a

moral law—if we have upset the equilibrium of nature, it must be readjusted.

It is always possible, however, to neutralize a force, by directing against it another force, equal in power and moving in an opposite direction. Thus if we have made mistakes in the past, we can to a considerable extent modify the results, by setting in operation neutralizing forces. If we send out a strong thought of love immediately after we have made the mistake of thinking a thought of hate, we can overcome what otherwise would have been the inevitable effect of the hate. *This great possibility of modifying destiny should not be overlooked.*

Is it right to speak of any law of nature as merciless? Do we call gravity merciless, because one day, while walking along a river bank, the soil gave way under our feet, and gravity dragged us to the rocks below? Of course we do not, because we realize that if gravity ceased but for a single instant, there would be a terrific explosion, and this earth would drift off through space as a mere cloud of impalpable dust. Do we call nature cruel, because she produces a diseased condition in our physical bodies, when we become dissipated and lax in our morals? Then why should we do so, if the result of some similar lack of self-control, for one reason or another, *does not come at once but is postponed until a future life?* Are we not the same souls, and do we not as souls retain full memories of all past lives, which, after all, are only days in our greater soul life?

Nature is most wise in enabling us *physically* to forget the past and start with a clean record. How many a man has wished and prayed for that very boon in this life! Memories are frequently a handicap and even a torment when accompanied by remorse—it is for this reason, among others, that we start afresh each life on earth. Furthermore, full memories of all our past lives would make it possible, to a considerable extent, to

anticipate the future, because we could pick out the causes which would produce coming events. Now recall to mind some month or year which was filled with much sorrow and difficulty. Would we have had the courage to have faced that period had we known what was coming? Our very ignorance of the future was an enormous advantage, and because we did not see the events until they were actually upon us, we were victorious over them in the end. Knowledge of the future, at our present stage of evolution, would be a curse and not a help, would be the cause of countless failures, where ignorance of what is to be brings success.

What we do bring with us when we come, however, is the essence of our past experiences in the form of innate faculties and the voice of conscience. Whenever in business an old set of account books is closed and a new set opened, only the balances are brought forward. So when we commence a new incarnation we bring the *summation* of our past experiences in a form most suited to the needs and emergencies of physical life, hence those qualities of character, those powers to achieve, those inborn faculties, which make one child different from another.

This answer to destiny, often mentioned in theosophical literature as Karma, is not fatalistic in the slightest. Fatalism always implies that we are bound on an iron wheel of circumstances from which no effort of our own can free us. Karma, on the contrary, says that while in truth we are bound by what we have done in the past, yet each moment we live we are moulding and modifying the future by the decisions and choices we make. Free-will certainly does not mean that we are free to change the conditions of nature in any way that our whims may dictate, but that we are free to choose what we shall do *within* those conditions. If each one of us had the power to modify the world according to

our several fancies, what an inconceivable chaos would result!

One of the conditions of nature is, that when we choose, we must abide by the result of our choice. In this way we learn wisdom. If we decide to jump off a wall, it does not stop our fall for one instant, to wish, when we are halfway down, that we were on top again. If we jump off we must strike bottom—a cause is always followed by its effect. If we are wise we think before we jump.

This conception of destiny, when once understood, results in a philosophy of optimism. Every hardship we experience is an old debt paid and we are glad of it; instead of complaining or repining we seek eagerly for the lessons each event brings. The friends who gather round us have been our friends before; the ones we love this life will be with us again many times in the future, for love is a tie so strong that even death cannot break it.

There is no goal too high for us to reach; if we place our goal on the heights, it may not be reached for many lives, but reach it we shall, for that which we *will* to do we can do. All that is necessary is to turn every energy in that direction, to think of the goal, to desire it with all our heart, to seize every opportunity to draw nearer to it. If this is done there is no power on earth or in heaven which can prevent us from reaching it.

We may be handicapped, it is true, by foolish mistakes or contrary efforts we have made in the past, either in this life or in others, but the effects of these mistakes and efforts must in time become exhausted, and equally the new forces we are setting in operation now must produce *their* inevitable effects. So instead of bewailing our past mistakes, we resolutely set to work, under the inspiration of this philosophy, to mould the future into the likeness of our highest ideals, confident that if we set going each moment the best we know, the future,

immediate and distant, will be radiant with ever increasing happiness and filled with ever growing opportunities. The Good Law may be trusted to the end.

CHAPTER VII

THE SPLENDID GOAL

What is the nature of that wider life for which the long process of reincarnation is preparing us? Assuredly not an inactive existence in some spiritual realm where for all eternity we remain in an ecstasy of devotional contemplation. This may appeal to the mystic and the saint, who love seclusion and freedom from the contacts of the world, but to the normal man and woman of to-day, a future existence of wide and beneficent activity would be more attractive, and more in keeping with what is apparently the purpose of our physical existence.

Does not the greatest happiness come to us now when we have successfully accomplished some good work, created something useful or beautiful, or have been of service to others? There is, of course, a passing pleasure in winning a prize, receiving a pleasing gift, and enjoying an entertainment or trip, but such pleasure can never equal in quality or intensity the happiness which comes when we realize that we have contributed something of value to the world.

This happiness is instinctive—it is the expression in us of the universal joy in creation. We may see that joy in the very exuberance with which nature fashions whirling atom and flashing star, colored flower and rugged crag, creeping lichen and forest giant, flying moth and laboring man, painted coral and threatening cloud, insect wing and flaming nebula, modeling whole kingdoms of living things with inexhaustible invention, lightly touching all with charm and grace, draping some

in sober hues, others in maddest colors, yet all with beauty, designing some in terms of pure geometry, others with wild fancy, some as of lacework, others with limitless strength—verily as we gaze our hearts quicken with the creative vitality of it all, and we feel the joy of its divine Inventor as He moulds in plastic matter form after form in infinite variety to express life after life in infinite complexity.

We need not depreciate the love of activity, the admiration for efficiency, the worship of achievement, which are marked characteristics of the modern man. They are the first expressions in the race of a new sense of power, which in the end will lead to mastery of the physical world. From our present efforts, misguided and unbalanced as frequently they are, will arise in time true skill in action, which is one of the ways of gaining knowledge of the Divine. We ought not regard such efforts and ideals as merely a passing phase—rather they are the bursting through the crust of civilization of long pent up forces, the result of the onward pressure of evolution.

We shall not be able to understand the profound significance of evolution so long as we think of God as separate from the universe, as existing apart somewhere in space and, as an *external* Creator, fashioning the worlds in cosmic matter. The evolution of a universe does not resemble the building of a house, because the human artisans who wield saw and hammer are not *part* of the house; but we may compare an evolving universe to a living body, for the universe is living, and as is the case with a body, the guiding, controlling Intelligence is within, not without.

Long ago we were told that "in Him we live and move and have our being," and this seems to be literally the truth. Every form, moving or unmoving, from the tiny atom beneath our feet to the farthest star, is the *mani-*

festation of Divinity, and in affirming this we are not advocating a crude pantheism by bringing God down to the level of matter, but we are lifting matter up to God, though beyond doubt the divine Life infinitely transcends the material universe.

We speak carelessly of matter as if it were inert and dead, but scientific experiments have indicated that it is wonderfully sensitive, platinum responding in particular to changes in temperature amounting to only 1/100,000 of one degree. Electrical experiments have also shown that a bar of steel, far from being a cold, dead mass of metal, is composed of atoms and molecules which thrill and quiver if even a warm finger is placed on the surface of the bar.

As we gaze starwards on a brilliant night and trace the sparkling swarms of mighty suns flung bannerwise across the bowl of space, the immensity of the universe awes us to silence, and we realize something of the titanic forces which must span the interstellar spaces holding each blazing star on its appointed way. Still more intense grows the feeling of reverence when it flashes upon us that each one of these millions of suns probably has attendant planets which bear upon their surface living humanities similar to our own. Stirred by the thought, our imagination carries us out into the depths of space, and as we look back upon the mighty universe we have just been contemplating, it has dwindled to a distant star cluster, one among millions of other clusters which float in the silent vastnesses surrounding us. Space without end, neither top nor bottom nor sides; splendid suns without number, arranged in clusters and colossal masses of clusters, each solar system the physical body of a vast Intelligence, each star cluster the form of a still mightier Consciousness, the whole being but cells and organs in the body of God, the Universal Consciousness. Then we know that we must cast aside for-

ever all our childish little ideas of God as a magnified human being, and strive to think of Him as the Universal Life, the Limitless Consciousness, the Eternal Love, the very source and heart of all that is. "Everything that is, is God."

When we return to a contemplation of the earth, nature has taken on new dignity, a deeper significance. No longer can we look indifferently at the various kingdoms of nature: mineral, vegetable, animal, human and superhuman, for we see that each one has sprung into being because of the pressure of the divine Life welling up *through* matter, bearing with it countless centers of consciousness, which in the human kingdom become individualized as souls. Wave after wave of this Life pushes its way up through matter, modeling it into ever more complex forms, until out of the mineral arises the vegetable, out of the vegetable the animal, out of the animal the human, out of the human the divine.

Every form in the universe is ceaselessly growing, passing as the centuries speed on, from immobility to freedom, from darkness to light, from ignorance to wisdom, from a less perfect to a more perfect stage. Ultimate perfection is never reached, for ultimate perfection is God, but every living thing is continually becoming more perfect and does in time reach perfection *in its stage of growth.* Thus we may think of a perfect man, but when such perfection is reached, a more glorious goal is seen ahead, and when that is won, still another is visible. Progress is infinite, therefore happiness is infinite. Though we may gain much wisdom, there is ever more wisdom for the winning. Though we may gain true love, there is ever greater love to embody, arising as love does from the heart of the Divine. Though we may gain great skill in action, even greater skill is possible, for we are being taught in a world built by the Master Worker.

Joy becomes more intense as we advance along the evolutionary path, because there is never any end to the glories unveiled to our awakening comprehension. The universe may be compared to one of those Christmas transformations, so dear to the heart of every child, in which scene melts into scene with ever increasing beauty and color, until the childish eyes are aglow with delight and expectation. So also with us as we grow upwards, but in the universe the transformations are endless, God ever concealing Himself within some lovelier creation. Truly it has been said that "veil after veil shall lift, but there shall be veil after veil behind." This is the zest of life, this the inspiration of progress, this the eternal mystery of the Godhead.

Evolution is the name we have given to that limited portion of the never-ceasing progress or transformation within the universe, which we are able to observe here on earth. Our understanding of evolution is often distorted, however, because that tiny portion of the process we are now witnessing is the hardest and most trying of all—it may be compared to the uninspiring scale practice which is needed before one can become a skilful musician. All great structures and achievements have their scaffolding stage, during which beauty is lacking and the surroundings are unpleasant, but the edifice concealed at first by the rough timbers is later revealed in all its beauty. So with human character, which is now being built up so laboriously block by block. It is oftentimes unlovely, because incomplete, but there is a beauty and unlimited possibilities in every man, clearly visible to a Master's eye.

There seems to be no limit to the powers we may evolve when we make the effort, for our consciousness is a Ray of the divine Light, and to that Ray all achievements are possible in time. We may think of each soul body as a lens, through which the Ray of universal Light is

shining, so that while we are true spiritual individuals, even as the image of the sun cast by a burning glass is separate from all other images, nevertheless we are but reflections of the one great Consciousness. Has it not been said that we were created in the image of God, and do we not recall the admonishing words: "Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

Growth is not the *addition* of qualities to our character; it is the stimulation to activity and to expression of qualities which we possessed all the time but in a *latent* condition. Development is therefore an unfolding of the powers which are hidden within, even as the beauty of the rose is concealed in the bud. The purpose of evolution—the trials and hardships, the difficulties and successes, the loves and hates, the pleasures and disappointments, the luxuries and privations—is to stir us, coax us, and, if need be, force us, to awaken to activity and power the hidden, slumbering faculties of the soul, and to show us how we may master world after world if only we make the effort.

"Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
. . . . . and to *know,*
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendor may escape,
Than effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without."

Most people do not learn either willingly or voluntarily, but seek to spend their days in amusement and fleeting pleasures, hence sooner or later, Nature, who is an aspect of God, finds it necessary to resort to drastic measures in order to teach them those things they must learn. Growth is swift when we take our own evolution

in hand, and strive to co-operate with the divine Will which makes for progress, but advancement is painfully slow for millions of human beings because they merely exist, mechanically following a daily routine, and never think of seeking out the purpose of life.

When we see around us men and women who can do with ease that which we cannot do and possess greater powers than we—a strong character, a superb intellect, a soaring spirituality, a power to achieve that is inspiring—there is no cause for despair, any more than a child should become despondent because he is not yet a student in college. Such men and women have outstripped us in certain ways and are therefore nearer to the splendid goal than we, but as soon as we put forth similar and equal efforts, we shall lift ourselves to their level. It may take years or even lives to accomplish this end, depending upon our present stage of development, but nothing can prevent us from reaching *any* level of achievement upon which we set our will.

The splendid goal is not a changeless thing; it varies with the development of each aspiring consciousness, for it is the next step forward in evolution for that consciousness. For an intelligent animal, the splendid goal is humanity; for a human being it is Initiation; for an Initiate it is Mastership; for a Master it is a still more stupendous height far beyond our comprehension, but for all it is the gleaming gateway ahead, on the other side of which open out the illumined vistas of a larger life.

Initiation is the splendid and indescribable *Welcoming* by the Masters, the Elder Brothers of the race, of those men and women who have risen to that level of development, through varied experience gained during many lives on earth, where they are nearing the point of graduation from the world-school. Initiation is the goal for every human being, and though for millions its attain-

ment is still remote because of their general undevelopment, nevertheless many are coming into incarnation now for whom Initiation is comparatively near at hand. A very few will gain it this life if they were so fortunate as to commence their training while still young; a number will win their way to this superb height next life on earth if they take their evolution in hand *now;* many, however, will reach this glorious consummation of physical existence in only a few incarnations, if they steadfastly commence to practice *this life* on earth, those simple rules of physical, moral, mental and spiritual education so clearly explained in Theosophy.[1]

To reach Initiation the help of a Master is needed, for there are many lessons to be learned and much training to undergo both in this and in the invisible worlds. Therefore it will be well for us to know something of the Masters, of their work for humanity, and how their attention may be attracted so that we may receive the necessary assistance.

When a man, through the long course of evolution, reaches perfection as a human being and is therefore under no obligation or necessity to reincarnate any longer, he does not withdraw into the utter bliss of some spiritual realm, leaving us, his younger brothers, to struggle unaided with our many sorrows, trials and problems. Unselfishness and compassion are two of the many priceless lessons thoroughly taught in this world-school, and all who graduate from it are embodiments of these two spiritual qualities. Therefore one who has completed his human evolution, unless assigned to other work in the solar system for which there is need, remains in the invisible worlds surrounding the earth and in a

[1] Those who are really in earnest cannot do better than to obtain a copy of *At the Feet of the Master* and strive to make part of their character the precepts so simply laid down in that wonderful little book of the higher life.

most powerful way assists in the evolution of humanity.

Those who have thus remained are often spoken of as Masters (though in a stricter sense the title "Master" is restricted to those of the perfected men who accept pupils) and they form collectively the Great White Lodge or Occult Hierarchy, traditions of which have existed for centuries in the Orient. The evolution of the whole of humanity takes place under the guiding care of this mighty spiritual Organization, and in countless ways the individual Masters help not only the race as a whole, but also individual men and women when they are found worthy.

Though many of the Masters are in incarnation, they live physically, lives of seclusion, and seldom mingle in the hurry and rush of civilization. It would be a useless expenditure of energy for them to take part in our physical activities, as their beneficent work is done almost wholly and to much better advantage in the invisible worlds. There they can come more intimately in contact with the many millions of souls who populate this planet, and are able to help them more effectively than would be possible if they moved among mankind physically, for here we are handicapped decidedly by the limitations of the brain and accordingly are much less responsive to spiritual forces.

The Masters from time to time, when civilization is ready, introduce new ideals and aspirations into the minds of men, by sending out into the mental currents of the subtler worlds, powerful waves of thought and feeling. These flood the higher levels of the emotional and mental worlds, and are caught up and repeated physically by receptive people. It is for this reason that stimulating ideals, forceful ideas, important inventions and higher moral standards so often arise spontaneously in many parts of the world about the same time. The cause of these sudden enthusiasms—as, for example, the

intense desire for universal peace, the radiant ideal of religious tolerance, the inspiring dream of a co-operative civilization, the sense of personal responsibility for the welfare of others, the quickening feeling of the need for universal brotherhood—will forever remain an enigma, until we learn of this hidden labor of our divine Teachers.

Rarely one of the Masters himself comes out openly into the world in order to give with the skill, possible only to a Master, some important truth or teaching, or help with his physical presence in the moulding of civilization in some new and urgent way. Thus it is said, by some of the pupils who are in a position to know, that one of the greatest of the Masters is coming this century, possibly within the next few years if the world can be made ready, to start a new religious and spiritual impulse. And from many indications, the opening quarter of this century does seem to be a turning point in civilization, and it may well be that there lies ahead of us in the immediate future, under the supervision and the inspiration of the presence of this great Teacher, not only new departures in science, philosophy, art and sociology, but also a wonderful renaissance of religion and spirituality, which will transform the world.

More often the Masters send some pupil into the world definitely to influence civilization in some necessary direction, either by his skill in leadership, his genius in art, his wisdom in writing or his eloquence in speaking. The world is led from ideal to ideal, from height to height, largely by the influence of great personalities, and if we had the power to look behind the scenes, we should find that many of the great men and women of history, both immediate and remote, were the conscious or unconscious messengers of the Masters.

Sometimes the Masters find it necessary to establish a movement or organization through which they can more adequately and widely convey to the world, certain

points of view which must be generally accepted before civilization can take its next step forward. It was for this purpose that the Theosophical Society came into existence as a small though definite part of the great plan for the helping of humanity—even as other movements have their part to play in this plan. One of the important reasons, among others, for which the Society exists, is to influence public opinion to accept a number of stimulating spiritual ideals, helpful philosophical truths, fundamental interpretations of life and destiny, and wholesome information regarding unseen things, in order that humanity may have an *adequate* working philosophy of life during the important changes in the established order which are now appearing and will shortly take place. Theosophical information has been of value in turning back the rising tide of materialism, which threatened some two score years ago to engulf all spiritual aspiration, and has also helped to restore to some of the great religions of the world—Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism—their power to inspire and purify. Although Theosophy, in its purity, is unknown to most, because their ideas concerning it have been based not upon study but upon prejudiced rumors and the distorted opinions of others, nevertheless its unlabeled teachings have spread everywhere, and many of the liberal and progressive ideas, which are now generally accepted, were considered peculiar to Theosophy thirty years ago. It is by this slow absorption of new ideas that civilization advances.

If the Masters exist and are guiding civilization, we may wonder why so much crime, injustice and ignorance exist among men. We should realize, however, that the Masters never coerce the world, nor try to *force* humanity along any line of progress, however desirable. They help in their powerful way whenever the slightest opportunity is offered and they constantly encourage and stim-

ulate, but they never compel. If they had bent our wills to theirs, this civilization would be far more perfect than it is now, but we would still be only obedient children, instead of developing, as we have partially done, the strength and initiative of self-reliant manhood. Lessons taught by precept alone are never so deep rooted as those impressed upon us by actual experience, and hence it is the Masters have allowed us to experiment and thereby test our imperfect ideas, realizing that only in this slow way—the way of evolution—can wisdom most surely be gained. Mistakes, failures and follies are more effective teachers than good counsel and advice.

The aim of the Masters is to evolve a civilization which may be relied upon to do what is right at any cost, not because of precepts which men obediently follow, but because of clear-sighted wisdom won in many a losing battle against wrong, oppression and injustice. They desire that the race shall be pure, not because of the untested virtue of innocence, but because it has arisen from the foulness of vice cleansed and made wise by inevitable suffering. They plan that humanity shall be wholly brotherly, not because of ignorance of hate, but because men have learned through experiencing enmity, selfishness and competition, that there is nothing so priceless as love, and that not one thing can be of lasting benefit to man or nation if it has been gained at the expense of others.

We learn only by contrasts; right is seen by contrast with wrong, purity by contrast with impurity, strength by contrast with weakness. This knowledge is the gift of physical experience, where such contrasts alone are possible, and it is worth everything through which we must go in our many incarnations to gain it. Experience is the magic wand which awakens the spiritual seed of consciousness after it has been planted in matter.

We may imagine some ideal civilization springing

forth full-formed from the divine Mind, which would be wonderful, glorious beyond all telling. But it would be a humanity of beautiful dolls, obeying blindly the Will of their Designer, and not a civilization which, though less beautiful, is infinitely more inspiring, because formed of spiritual intelligences who have won their way to their present standing by sheer mastery of circumstances, and, as scarred veterans, command homage and admiration. In this thought may lie hidden the inner necessity, not only for physical existence, but for the manifestation of the universe.

We should not shrink from experience, even though hard, for experience alone can help us win the splendid goal. *Knowledge of the world is as necessary to evolving humanity as spiritual understanding,* and we eventually shall gain both. For most of us, the swiftest growth comes when we labor diligently in the world, striving to solve the problems, overcome the difficulties, and manage the situations of daily life with efficiency and high motive. Some think of the world as spread with the snares of a devil and counsel turning the thoughts constantly to heaven; Theosophy regards the world as the crucible of God in the white heat of which character is refined. Others believe that spiritual progress is impossible in the midst of civilization and advise retirement from the world; Theosophy states that the instruction we receive in daily life is absolutely necessary here and hereafter, for without the detailed knowledge and wide experience which physical existence alone can give us, we shall not be able to accomplish successfully or even commence the mighty work in the unseen realms for which these many incarnations on earth have been fitting us.

There are certain ways of *meeting* experience, which are most effective in their results, for not only do they intensify life to a remarkable extent, give richness and meaning to every event and make us attentive to oppor-

tunities, but they also hasten our development, and above all bring us forcibly to the attention of one of the Masters. These attitudes, which we should seek to cultivate as we go forth to meet experience, are as follows:

Teachableness:—So many people go through life complaining of the hardships of their lot, anticipating troubles which never come, blaming others for their own failures, fretful over small things and remarks, fussing with trivialities, that it is refreshing to meet a man who thoughtfully examines each experience, pleasant or unpleasant, sees its lesson, notes where he has been at fault, and quietly determines not to make the same mistake again. There is so much subtle egotism in most of us, that rarely do we think of ourselves as the cause of many of our troubles. Practically everyone is convinced, when something unpleasant has happened, that some one else is to blame, but when anything particularly fortunate occurs, we are usually willing to acknowledge—modestly, of course—our responsibility in the matter. Considerable development is shown when one is willing to acknowledge responsibility for failure.

Every teacher will recall the pleasure which was felt when a pupil eagerly co-operated in learning the lessons assigned, but probably remembers also with equal vividness the discouragement felt, when it was necessary to force a lesson on a stubborn child who, careless and indifferent, persisted in idling away his time. In this world-school many of us resemble such foolish children, and no doubt that is one of the reasons why mother Nature is obliged to administer a birching now and then, in the form of strenuous experience, to make us learn. Far greater happiness would be ours if, instead of thoughtlessly letting the days slip by, we sought for the priceless lessons they bring. Nothing happens by chance; there is a purpose, and an excellent purpose, in all things and events. Our business is to find that purpose and profit

by it; if we do not, the experience is repeated again and again, with minor variations, until we do.

We make ourselves miserable oftentimes by clinging too tenaciously to our possessions and associations. "Transplanting is as good for us as for seedlings," tersely says Mrs. Besant. The chief value of the attractive things of the world is that they call forth efforts in us to gain them, and efforts awaken the power to achieve. Possessions are of about as much intrinsic value to us, who are deathless souls, as books and a slate are to a schoolboy. When they have accomplished their purpose there is no reason why they should not be discarded. The soul cannot use possessions in its own world where consciousness is the one reality, and so when on earth those things which we have gathered together are taken away from us, it is wiser to turn bright-eyed to whatever else Nature has in store, than to complain and grieve and drum our heels upon the floor like angry children deprived of their toys. Though we can realize physically but little of the richer, fuller life of our soul consciousness in the heaven world, our duty is to be keenly alert to the meaning and purpose of everything which happens, in order that the soul within may gain clear pictures of the world without, and in time master the complexities of physical existence. Verily the Masters rejoice to help those who are willing to be taught.

Efficiency:—The ability to work without waste of energy, loss of movement, or unnecessary friction, is one of the great ideals of our modern day, and is valuable equally to the aspirant for spiritual advancement as to the man of affairs. Efficiency implies concentration, the paying of close attention to everything we do, and is a faculty of much value as it stimulates a magnificent mental development. If we are practicing efficiency nothing should be done carelessly or hastily but with full attention, each action preceded by thought and guided

by judgment. Efficiency has no place for slip-shod methods or slovenly workmanship; whatever is done, either sweeping a room or managing a factory, inscribing a letter or writing a book, should be done with all our might and all our skill. We should also be willing to profit by the experiences of others, and therefore make a point of reading carefully the best which has been written upon a subject before we act or judge. How many mistakes and false opinions would be eliminated if this rule were followed! Those who seek the Masters would do well to practice efficiency in all things.

Courage:—Those who take their evolution in hand need courage, for destiny responds to their appeal for progress, and the current of life moves on more swiftly. Many difficulties will confront us, arising out of mistakes and wrong judgments we have made in the past, and frequently we shall falter and fail, for we are but human. Failure in itself means little, however, if we have the courage to go on again and again after every setback, thereby wringing from each failure its drop of wisdom. We must have high courage to play the game of life well and with spirit, as becomes strong souls, and never to fear the future, no matter what it may bring.

When we realize that our destiny is actually self-caused, and that the sequence or arrangement of the chief events which come into our life is in the charge of omniscient Intelligences, we cast aside all apprehension and go bravely forward with head erect, knowing that nothing can harm the inner Self, and that all our destiny can do is to deprive us of our little possessions, cause us some temporary suffering, or strike away our physical body; through it all *we* pass unscathed, and if we have knowledge, unshaken, for in us flames the divine Fire.

Our destiny is so wisely adjusted that nothing ever comes which is too much to bear, *if we keep up courage.*

Many a man has been overwhelmed physically and gone down to apparent defeat, only to rise triumphant and rejoicing on the other side of death, because of a debt well paid and a victory won. No matter how hard the battle goes, fight on, and above all never make the mistake of thinking that suicide will make things easier and bring forgetfulness. We may kill the physical body but we cannot annihilate memory or remorse, and those who have slain their bodies when courage failed found life harder on the other side. Never give up, struggle on, even against heavy odds, for the Spirit within is indestructible and imperishable, and knows not defeat.

Brotherliness:—Many people, responding to the call of brotherhood, have started out bravely to be of service to their fellow men, but meeting with ingratitude, indifference and misunderstanding, have become discouraged, disheartened and even bitter. Whereupon they let the world go on unaided, declaring that brotherly service was an impossible ideal. Such experience is almost inevitable at this stage of evolution, as all who serve will testify, because humanity is undeveloped in so many ways, but does not this very absence of responsive feeling on the part of those we seek to help, tell us, more plainly than before, that service is needed? Ingratitude should only inspire more earnest efforts on our part if our attitude were right.

The difficulty is, that while we believe ourselves to be wholly unselfish in our desire to serve, yet a taint of selfishness has crept in, for all unconsciously we crave praise, recognition, gratitude and even applause. Not receiving these, we feel hurt and disappointed. If we were absolutely unselfish we would not ask for thanks, but labor for the sake of the work, and because we love our fellow men.

Love is the essence of brotherliness, and unless we feel true affection for those about us, with all their faults

and weaknesses, our efforts to serve will not long endure. There are too many disappointments. But when we love, it inspires in us that steady enthusiasm, emotional or mental according to our temperament, which we call devotion, and with devotion a man, with even few talents, may be of great service to the world and may go far toward the Masters. To him no service is too small, no labor too arduous. He thinks of all around him as his brothers, and that is enough. It is not without deep meaning that a Master prefers the name Brother above all other titles, and that one who has reached this lofty height never even thinks of receiving praise or recognition, because his service of humanity is perfect and therefore utterly selfless. The Masters are joyous beyond all telling because they never think of themselves but ever of the happiness of others. Should we not go and do likewise?

In this marvelous world-school, every one, strong enough possibly to become a leader, is tested even as an important piece of machinery is tested in an engineering laboratory. If the tests, which are those of daily life, are passed successfully, wider opportunities arise, but if they are not passed, the candidate for leadership is placed among the followers again for further instruction. Every day we see men rise above their fellows only to fall back once more into obscurity—they were not strong enough nor big enough to wield power. As Elbert Hubbard says: "The man who is worthy of being a leader of men will never complain of the stupidity of his helpers, of the ingratitude of mankind, or of the inappreciation of the public. These things are all a part of the great game of life, and to meet them and not go down before them in discouragement and defeat, is the final proof of power."

Discrimination:—There is a sense of values called discrimination, which, when developed, enables us to

choose correctly between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, the real and the unreal, the important and the unimportant. Though of the utmost importance, discrimination cannot be taught by precept, rule or book; experience alone can awaken this Godlike faculty. Because of the infinite varieties of experience, no two sets of conditions between which we must choose are ever exactly alike, hence rules are useless and we must rely upon whatever judgment we possess.

Our power to discriminate measures exactly our position on the evolutionary pathway, and unerring discrimination is found only in a Master, because he has completed his human evolution. We may do much, however, to improve the accuracy of our decisions and thereby awaken discrimination, by striving each time we choose to do what is brotherly, what is pure, what is thoughtful, taking always into consideration the needs of others rather than our own desires. In deciding where we can best be of service especially, should discrimination be used, for many people attempt that for which they are not fitted, and thrust themselves where they have no business. Intrusion does not constitute service.

Does this life in which we strive to be teachable, efficient, courageous, brotherly and discriminative, seem too difficult, the goal too high? It will not seem so, if once we feel the power and urge of the Soul within. But to feel the prompting of that greater spiritual Self, we must calm the mind and emotions until our subtle bodies are as still as the unruffled surface of a mountain lake. Then the light and peace of the Soul flood the mind and brain, and we know ourselves to be divine. The Soul is a shadowy unreality to most people, because they are ceaselessly engaged with external things and have never tried to sense that spiritual Presence, the "Unknown Guest," who awaits so silently just beyond the reach of our ever-active, useful little minds until

we bid him enter and assume command. A Master once said to his pupil: "When your body wishes something, stop and think whether *you* really wish it. For *you* are God, and you will only what God wills; but you must dig deep down into yourself to find the God within you, and listen to His voice, which is *your* voice."

If we yearn to find the Masters, but hesitate to try because of our many imperfections, we should realize that they never ask the impossible, but always allow for our mistakes and failings, for they have not forgotten that long ago they too were as frail as we. Truly they have been called the Masters of Wisdom and Compassion, and we may trust them utterly, for their great love and guiding care is divine in its splendor and power.

Words alone do not attract their attention; they judge of our fitness for special assistance by our deeds, and not by our appeals, however eloquent. Social standing does not help us, blue blood is of no avail, wealth and possessions cannot assist, for the Masters do not judge by the standards of the world. Our advancement depends entirely upon our character, our self-mastery, the use to which we have put our talents. If we have used our faculties for selfish gain and pleasure, if our thoughts are unregulated and our emotions impure, obviously we are not yet ready for the Master. But if we have used our talents for the benefit of others, and have at least partially succeeded in controlling our thoughts and refining our emotions, then the Master knows us in the invisible worlds though we may not as yet know him. If we are in earnest our next step is to learn all we can about the Path, as it is called in Theosophy, and deliberately to commence and steadily continue that training of mind, emotions and body, so necessary to success.[1]

[1] See "A Course of Reading in Theosophy" at the end of this volume.

Sometimes people believe that they can serve humanity only by giving up all family ties, business obligations and duties, and devoting themselves entirely to altruistic and other benevolent work. If we are *free* to do such work, we, of course, have cause for rejoicing, but if we have already taken upon ourselves duties and obligations, these responsibilities come first in the eyes of the Masters. To shirk one's responsibilities is always a blunder, and if we do so in order to serve, such service does not lead us to the splendid goal. Listen to the words a Master spoke to one who followed him: "Because you try to take up higher work, you must not forget your ordinary duties, for until they are done you are not free for other service. You should undertake no new worldly duties; but those which you have already taken upon you, you must perfectly fulfil—all clear and reasonable duties which you yourself recognize, that is, not imaginary duties which others try to impose upon you."

All good work becomes service when done for the sake of others, and it does not matter whether that work lies in a business office, in a school, in a factory or in a home. It is not what we do that constitutes service, it is why we do it—for self or for others. Unselfishness and forgetfulness of self are priceless qualifications in the higher life.

In exact proportion to our ability to help, encourage and inspire others will be the swiftness of our approach to Initiation, and those who are wise train themselves carefully along some special line of service—teaching, writing, speaking, artistic power, or skill in some useful way—so that they may go to the Master, when they ask his assistance, bearing in their hands, as did the wise men of old, some gift of value. The Master does not need incense and gold, but he does prize our offerings if they are of service to humanity, for he has dedicated

the whole of his mighty powers to service, and if we would reach him and share in his joy, we must follow in his footsteps, and as apprentices, strive to become like unto him. Great shall be our happiness if we lay the gifts of a trained mind, pure emotions and skilled hands upon the altar of service, and in the midst of daily life bring the calm strength, the sweet serenity, the radiant joyousness of spiritual consecration.

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The Theosophical Society

OBJECTS

First.—To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color.

Second.—To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.

Third.—To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man.

The Theosophical Society is composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of the above objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of good will, whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their study with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high ideals, and they regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition, and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion. They extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow, but as a duty they perform, and they seek to remove ignorance, not to punish it. They see every religion as an expression of the Divine Wisdom, and prefer its study to its condemnation, and its practice to proselytism. Peace is their watchword, as Truth is their aim.

No person's religious opinions are asked upon his joining, nor is interference with them permitted, but everyone is required to show to the religion of his fellow-members the same respect as he claims for his own. The Society has no dogmas, and therefore no heretics. It does not shut any man out because he does not believe the theosophical teachings. A man may deny every one of them, save that of human Brotherhood, and claim his place and his right within its ranks.

The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 and consists now of National Societies or Sections in twenty-three of the different countries of the world, each with its own General Secretary and its own organization. Mrs. Annie Besant is the International President of the Society. The headquarters of the American Section are at Krotona, Hollywood, Los Angeles, California, and communications asking for information or regarding membership should be sent there addressed to the General Secretary. A List of the Lodges in America will be forwarded on application.

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